



PLAIN TALK for Parents

About Your Two- to Three-Year-Old Child

Every child and parent is unique. This information highlights patterns of growth and development that apply to most children. As you watch, listen to, and play with your child, you'll discover when she or he is ready for new activities and skills. You'll find your own ways to use old and new ideas to fit your personality, your family, and your child's needs.

GENERAL TRAITS

- Behavior may change quickly from loving to independent & back again.
- Needs little help climbing up & down stairs.
- Demands a lot of parental attention.
- May hold a glass of milk in one hand.
- Knows several hundred words & may speak in two- or three-word sentences.
- Loves to be read to but may not have the patience to go through a book cover to cover.
- Begins to help dress (undressing comes first).
- Uses a spoon in feeding.
- May achieve toilet training or show interest in using the toilet.
- Likes to imitate adult activities.
- Enjoys other children but may find sharing difficult.

WHAT A PARENT CAN DO

- Your child's rebelliousness may be hard to take, but accept it as a positive stage of development, as an attempt to move away from babyhood. ("No" will often mean "yes," so look for other cues as well.)
- Keep rules to a minimum. Ask yourself: How many "no's" are needed for this age?
- Let your child express all feelings, negative as well as positive.
- Allow your child to "help" with simple tasks.

- If you begin toilet training & your efforts don't pay off in a week or two, your child isn't ready. Go back to diapers.
- Present nutritious meals but don't push your child to eat. Your child is too young to learn table manners.
- Develop routines to help ease bedtime and leave-taking. A nighttime routine might be a bath before bedtime, a book, a good-night kiss, a hug, & a tuck into bed.
- Pay as little attention as possible to temper tantrums.

TOYS FOR THE 2- TO 3-YEAR-OLD

- Cars & trucks
- Pail & shovel
- Baskets
- Dolls - soft & washable
- Large crayons & finger paints
- Toys that teach shapes
- Play dough
- Balls
- Blocks
- Riding toys & wagons
- Old keys
- Hammer & pegboard
- Large brushes for "painting" with water
- Cloth squares of bright colors
- Books

This material was adapted from St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center Guide to Health with their permission.

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Wisconsin Child Care Information Center (CCIC)

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